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AUTHOR Wirzbicki, Philip J.; Smith, Barry D.
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ABSTRACT

The predictive utility of a proposed need-press competence (NPC) model of satisfaction was compared with that of the traditional need-press fit model. Structured interviews with 30 residents from two nursing homes provided measures of needs, press, competence, and satisfaction. The NPC model was a better predictor of expressed satisfaction than the need-press model, and the potential for need satisfaction was a more important correlate of expressed satisfaction than person-environment fit. Results also indicated that continued efforts to increase the press and competence levels in nursing homes would be helpful, particularly along those dimensions where need press competence analyses suggest that need satisfaction will be most problematic. (Author)

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# Implications of a Need-Press-Competence Model for Institutionalized Elderly

Philip J. Wirzbicki

Dartmouth Medical School

Barry D. Smith

University of Maryland

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## Abstract

The predictive utility of a proposed need-press competencee (NPC) model of satisfaction was compared with that of the traditional need-press fit model. Structured interviews with 30 residents from two nursing homes provided measures of needs, press, competence, and satisfaction. The NPC model was more predictive of expressed satisfaction than the need-press model, and the potential for need satisfaction was a more important correlate of expressed satisfaction than person-environment fit. The NPC model recommends that continual efforts be made to increase the press and competence levels in nursing homes, particularly along those dimensions where idiographic and nomothetic need-press-competence analyses suggest that need satisfaction will be most problematic.

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## Introduction

This study was conducted as part of a larger intervention program funded by the Administration on Aging and designed to enhance competence and personal satisfaction among community-dwelling and institutionalized elderly. Thus, a need for the understanding of the theorectial determinants of satisfaction arose. An integrated need-press-competence (NPC) model of satisfaction was proposed and evaluated. As with its antecedents, Lawton and Nehemow's (1973) competence-press and Murray's (1938) traditional need-press formulations, the integrated NPC model is seen as a useful theoretical framework across the life cycle. This paper will discuss its particular implications for the institutionalized elderly on whom it was validated.

Both need-press and competence-press models adopt the notion of person-environment fit as articulated by French, Rodgers, and Cobb (1975). They maintain that individual strain and dissatisfaction reach their highest levels when the discrepancy between relevant person and environmental variables is at a maximum. In contrast, the NPC model maintains that need satisfaction is the most important determinant of expressed satisfaction. Whereas the fit models argue that press and competence levels in excess of need levels constitutes a lack of fit, resulting in both strain and dissatisfaction, the NPC model argues that competence and press in excess of need levels creates abundant potential for need satisfaction, hence higher levels of expressed satisfaction should result. It was further hypothesized that an integrated NPC model would have greater predictive power than a formulation based only on needs and press.

Needs were conceptualized according to an outcome approach, described by Lawler (1973), which defines needs as clusters of functionally related outcomes (Rotter, 1954) one would ideally wish to obtain. Psychological press was conceived, following Schneider (1975), as the individual's global perceptions of the environment abstracted from discrete molecular cues. Competence was defined, following Tyler (1977), Smith (1968), and Ezekiel (1968), as an active planful coping style combined with a sense of self-efficacy. Following Lawton's (1977) guidelines, a battery of widely used satisfaction measures was collected which assessed life, present, and various dimension of satisfaction.

## Method

A total of 40 residents, 30 females and 9 males, from two proprietary and one nonprofit, denominational nursing home completed the measures. The average age of the residents was 75. Measures were administered individually in a structured interview format.

Seven dimensions of press were assessed. They were 1) autonomy, 2) activity, 3) support-trust, 4) practical problem orientation, 5) order and organization, 6) resources, and 7) medical orientation. Needs were measured along the same seven dimensions as press. Tyler's (1978) Behavioral Attributes of Psychosocial Competence (BAPC) scale assessed the competent person's active planful coping style. Finally, satisfaction was measured by the Life Satisfaction Index (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961), the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969), and Lawton's (1975) Revised Philadelphia Geriatric Morale Scale. Satisfaction with respect to the specific need-press demensions investigated was assessed by means of seven four-point rating scales which were summed to create what we termed a dimensional satisfaction score.

## Results

A moderate degree of intercorrelation was found among all the satisfaction measures (see Table 1). Thus, they were converted to standard scores and averaged to create one measure of satisfaction. Scores on need, press, and competence were also converted into standard scores.

For each dimension, scores for fit and need satisfaction potential (NSP) were calculated from the need, press, and competence scores in accord with both the need-press and need-press-competence models. Thus, for the need-press model, fit scores were calculated by taking the absolute difference between need and press, while NSP scores reflected the extent to which press exceeded need level. Under the NPC model, fit scores reflected the absolute difference between need, press, and competence, while NSP reflected the extent to which averaged values of competence and press exceeded need levels. Averaging scores across the 7 dimensions created combined indices of fit and NSP, one each for the need press and need-press-competence models. These 2 fit and 2 NSP scores were then correlated with satisfaction (see Table 2).

The only significant correlation found was that for need satisfaction potential computed in accord with the need-press-competence model ($r(27) = .42$, $p$ .05). According to the Hotelling-Williams (1959) test. Significant differences between correlations ($z = 2.29$, $p < .01$; $z = 1.62$, $p < .05$) were obtained, indicating that the potential for need satisfaction predicted expressed satisfaction better than P-E fit. In sum, the results indicated support for the two major hypotheses; that is, the potential for need satisfaction is more highly related to expressed satisfaction than fit, and an integrated NPC model is more predictive than a model based only on needs and press.

## Discussion

The NPC model provides a general framework for predicting satisfaction. The essence of the model is that the simultaneous interplay of need, press, and competence levels determines the potential for need satisfaction which in turn predicts the extent of expressed satisfaction. For example, given low press levels, low levels of competence may be sufficient to satisfy low need levels, while high press may counterbalance low competence in satisfying needs of moderate magnitude. While it is hoped that the model is applicable across the life cycle, further testing on more diversified populations would be desirable to support its generalizability.

The need-press-competence model has particular implications for work with institutionalized populations. In institutional settings environmental press levels are frequently, and often legitimately, seen as the responsibility of professional staff. These levels should be sufficient to facilitate satisfaction of important needs. Further, environmental press levels on key dimensions, such as autonomy, activity, and practical problem or ientation, can effect the development and maintenance of individual competence. It is recommended that nursing home staff perform both idiographic and nomothetic need-press-competence analyses. These analyses can suggest treatment plans for the individual resident, as well as systematic changes to be made in the home.

In such analyses, determination of need and press levels is the first order of business. The measures used in this study, or real-ideal descriptions of the environment, or straightforward ratings and rankings all provide methods for obtaining this data. Important information become available

immediately. For example, in the homes studies the trust-support dimension was the highest rated need, but had the lowest environmental press. Further, the home having the highest press levels ($F$ (6, 70) = 5.95, $p < .001$) had the most satisfied residents ($F$ (6, 70) = 3.82, $p < .002$). This suggests that nursing homes should attempt to increase press levels, particularly those for support and trust. Sociometric ratings of social connectedness might provide a useful dependant measure for intervention programs designed to effect changes in trust and support levels.

Lastly, and most important, the model suggests that continual efforts be made to increase individual competence. In the homes studied, autonomy was the lowest rated need. This is a critical cause for concern as autonomy is an important component of competence. Indeed, the need for autonomy correlated significantly ($r$ (27) = .35, $p < .05$) with competence scores. Nursing homes should provide the support appropriate for their residents, but should avoid encouraging dependancy. Active resident governments and training in general problem solving strategies provide mechanisms through which residents efforts in their own behalf can be encouraged.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore the basic simplicity of the model, as this simplicity lends greatly to its utility. The model recommends that we be attentive to three major factos, what the person needs, what he or she can do for themselves to satisfy that need, and the extent to which the home environment supports the residents efforts in their own behalf. When the simultaneous consideration of these three variables suggests an imbalance, a target for change is identified.

Table 1

Intercorrelation Matrix of Six Satisfaction Measures

| | PGCAgit | PGCAge | PGCLone | Bradburn | Dimensional |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LS[a] | .12 | .58** | .58** | .39** | .62** |
| PGCAgit | --- | .19 | .41 | .10 | -.07 |
| PGCAge | | --- | .39 | .18 | .41** |
| PGCLone | | | --- | .22 | .42** |
| Bradburn | | | | --- | .47** |
| Dimensional | | | | | --- |

Note. Life Satisfaction (LS); Philadelphia Geriatric Center Agitation (PGCAgit), Attitude Toward One's Own Aging (PGCAge), Loneliness/ Dissatisfaction (PGCLone); Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn). Dimensional is the sum of satisfaction ratings for the specific dimensions.

[a]df = 28

*p .05

**p .001

Table 2

Correlations between both Need Satisfaction Potential and Fit and Satisfaction in the Need-Press only and Need-Press-Competence Conditions

| | Conditions | |
|---|---|---|
| | Need-Press only | Need-Press-Competence |
| Need Satisfaction Potential | .33 | .42* |
| Fit | -.31 | -.03 |

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